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GVRA-VR Quarterly Provider Information Forum-(Dual: StreamText & Zoom)

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>> SHEILA PIERCE: Good morning, everyone. Can you hear me okay? I believe we are ready to start.

>> Yes, I can hear you.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: Very good. Thank you. Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for your attendance today at our regular provider information forum. Today, we have a packed agenda for you. We hope you do find the information helpful. There are couple of things that in particular we will cover. One is we will hear from Jennifer howl who is our assistant director of client services and she will share with us some of the work they're doing which I hope all providers will find beneficial. In addition to that, we will hear an update on the information that we're updating in the provider guide line manual. Cheryl Roney will provide the management and she will walk through that information with you today. I thought I would provide some information on provider background checks for your staff. There are couple of questions we get often. So we have couple of slides that have been prepared to assist you with that information.

Sharon angel will go through the financial information that all of you have submitted I hope by now. And Ed is going to share a new dashboard to monitor our contract spend. And then in the end, we'll talk about processing our FY22 agreement. And provide some additional information for you. Again, I hope you do find everything that we have planned to share with you today helpful. At this time, I invite Jonathan Buxton, who's here to provide an agency welcome for the group today. Jonathan, if you would, please. Thank you.

>> JONATHAN: Good morning, everybody. I'm excited to see so many people on the call this morning. On behalf of GVRA, I want to welcome you to today's provider forum. We do have few administrative updates. I'm the director of GVRA administrator and I'm going to always give you few administrator updates. As a reminder if you were on the last call of the provider forum, we mentioned 1099 since we had changes to our basically our accounting structure. You will be receiving two 1099 going into this next year, so you'll get one through June 30 and one through the last half of the year. So I want to keyboard that on everybody's radar as we start nearing the end.

And I know it sounds like Sheila is going to touch on some of the contracts and status of that. We still have quite a few contracts out with individual providers. So if you have any questions, please feel free to let us know so we can get those in and so we don't have any laps in services to be provided.

I'm sure you noticed, we mentioned on the last call we were going to be trying out new electronic signature. So, hopefully, that worked out well for everybody. We encourage feedback whether it went well or if there's any issues with that, that was definitely we were trying to do to streamline that process and make sure that we were able to do things more expeditiously and become more modern and move towards the electronic sixties. So, hopefully, that worked out well. If there's any issues, feedback of good or bad is always welcome.

One thing we've been looking at is relating to ACH. We still have quite a few individuals out there and organizations out there receiving paper checks. We've been watching the news as everybody has, and we know there's some issues with postal services. Certainly, we definitely encourage you to consider ACHs as more expeditious path in receiving your money. So definitely keep that on your mind.

And I think some questions have come up in relation to the contract around the funding. So we changed the way we're doing the funding on the contracts. And we're doing 100% federal funding. That did not change the total amount of the contract. If you did have a dollar change to your contract, it was driven by some other information typically prior utilization and/or current projection of where we think the services are going to be.

So definitely, if you have seen that, it was really nothing to be concerned about. We're just changing some stuff to streamline some things on the back-end to facilitate the payment process and make things smoother on our end. So, hopefully, we don't have similar delays to what we've had historically.

In relation to facilities, I know last time we talked about we had several offices being in transition, so we did just complete the Canton office relocation. And now it's like located at 1300 road and that's with the DFCS office. The office is still in transition. We're still getting that location in place. Those staff are still serving clients and working out of Gainesville office and working remotely. So we want to make sure services are not being impacted to those individuals. As always, if you have questions on office locations, or contacting anybody, please look to the website where we have that information posted or certainly call the 800 number. (844)367-4872 number. And those were pretty much the updates I had for everybody. So again, we look forward to a good meeting today. And, hopefully, you guys will get some great information out of it. Thank you.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: Thank you very much, Jonathan. At this time, I like to welcome Jennifer howl to give client services update to the group. Thank you. Jennifer. Shawn very much for having me with you. I'm excited to become part of this group and continue working with you all going forward. Few updates I have from the VR field service. I want to let you know that every once, we are VR presentation. Is VR right for me? It's a referral to log on to our link, and hear little bit about a 15-minute Q&A where we provide information regarding the VR program, and we have the opportunity to ask questions. We encourage you to share this with any individuals that maybe seeking VR services. It's the first step to see exactly what the VR program is all about. That's on Wednesday. And we do a session at noon and then in the evening at 6:30. So you can check that out on our website.

On the hiring side, we've done well on bringing on new supervisors which will be helpful in service delivery and coordination monthly field staff. In particular, we're looking at some new supervisor position specifically focused around transition. And we have individuals in our Robin, Athens, Augusta College Park Area coming onboard. And we have a supervisor coming on hopefully in Marietta. We just financed the interview this week and we're making job offers. So everybody sent positive vibes that we get a lot of acceptances and move forward.

We're also in November looking at posting 37 new counselor positions. So we're really trying to bring back in our counseling workforce to ensure that all parts of the VR process are accessible, available, and appropriate to our clients and to serve as our resources to our providers. And right now, as we move forward, I'm really excited about one of our most recent hires. Our district 2 has been vacancy indicated for the district manager. And we're bringing on Celeste Harris who has worked with us for 23 years and has ex-sensitive VR knowledge. She's actually been serving as an interim district manager in District 3. So she's very familiar with our area across-the-board. And so Celeste, are you on? I just want you to come on and say hi and introduce yourself, because I have a feeling a lot of our providers are going to get to know you very well in the very near future as we move forward.

>> Thank you, Jennifer. Good morning, everyone. As Jennifer mentioned, I have been with the Agency a while. I began as a certified rehab counselor on to a team lead on to a Service Area manager, on to a supervisor, and now I district manager. I am looking forward to collaborating with each of you in district 2 to help us serve and meet the needs of our clients.

Our provider relation specialist in district 2 is Quinn Phelp. He will have our monthly provider fairs for you so we can put faces to names and we can help move forward. Again, it's a pleasure meeting each and every one of you.

>> Thank you, Celeste. I appreciate that and we're excited to have you onboard. If anybody needs to reach me, feel free to email and get in touch if there's any questions, concerns, or if you just want to share more information that we can share with our district managers in our field. I appreciate it. And we look forward to working with you. Thank you, Sheila.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: Thank you, Jennifer and Celeste. At this time, I will invite Cheryl to introduce our 3 providers that we selected to make presentations today. You know that at every opportunity we like providers to share with us what they're doing. Creative things they're doing working with VR clients. And that's especially important, because we all learn from each other. But there are staff that are on the link today from all over the state. So many of them do not know everyone. So this is an excellent opportunity for providers to, you know, share helpful information about the work that they're doing, and it helps all of us to get to know each other better. So at this time, I'll invite Cheryl to introduce the 3 providers who she selected to present today. Cheryl.

>> CHERYL: Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Sheila. We actually have four providers that are going to be presenting today. And we are going to start with Briggs & Associates. Okay, perfect. This one is, this provider big, big, and the presenter today is Julia Berkoski. And they have been a VR provider for 32 years and deliver the following services. They offer comprehensive vocational profile, vocational evaluation limited, job sampling, job coaching, traditional supported employment, customize supported employment, individual placement and support, and Project SEARCH supported employment.

Julia, are you on?

>> I'm on.

>> Okay.

>> Thank you.

>> Just let me know next slide. It was a little bit different when I transferred it over. So just say next slide.

>> Okay, that one is good. We can go to the next slide. Okay. So, yes, like she said, I'm from Briggs & Associates. We're an employment agency. And our philosophy is anyone who has the desire to work has the ability to be successful in the workplace.

So we have over 30 years of service in this employment agency. We maintain 80% employment rate. And during COVID, it actually dropped down to 20%. After we had some time and the pandemic has lightened up, we've gotten our employment back to 80%. So we're really proud of that.

Everyone that works, we believe should make minimum wage as the minimum. We have a lot of people that go over minimum wage. These are real jobs, they're real people. And so that's what we believe. We have a zero in exclusion field. So everyone that comes in ready and wants to work is able to work. We don't exclude people on their criminal history. We don't exclude people if they have a job and then quit the job, and have a bunch of jobs. We just continue to work with them until we find the right fit for them.

Next slide, please.

So it's not can they work? But it's what will it take for them to work? So we don't have any assessments or anything that somebody has to pass to be able to be ready to work. Briggs & Associates takes that responsibility on themselves. And we go and try to find a job that we can customize to fit that person. We don't fit the person into a job. Next slide, please.

So Briggs & Associates services, we have all different services and I'll touch on a few of them. Discovery is our beginning phase. We go and meet people, and we want to make sure that -- (noise interruption).

>> SHEILA PIERCE: This is Sheila, if you can please mute so we can hear Julia, it would be greatly appreciated.

>> So, basically, we want to spend time with people before we find a job and put them there. We want to know everything that they like and don't like. Yeah, so customized employment. We go to employers and we have an interest-based negotiation between the employers and the job-seekers, and we just make sure that it

works for the person that's getting the job, and that the employer understand what they are getting out of it. And it's just a negotiation to make sure everyone is on the same, you know, they have the same idea about what is going on and it works for everyone. So it's person-centered. Everything that we do is on, it's based on a person, what they like, what they dislike. We don't have anybody that -- we don't have groups that people work in. Everything is individualized.

Next slide, please. Thank you. So I'm going to tell ah story before we go through this slide. There was a person I served, and just kind of an example of everything that I've been saying is that she came to us in July of 2020. So this was in the middle of the pandemic. It was kind of, you know, different at those times. You didn't know how people were going to find jobs. We didn't know how interviews would look. People weren't meeting in person. So it was kind of a weird time. This particular individual wanted to work in childcare. And she had a lot of history working with her family, little kids and her family. Her mom was a teacher, so that was her interest in what she really wanted to do. Briggs & Associates took that information. We started researching new developments, new businesses in the community. We found there was actually this brand new private school opening up down the street from her house.

We were able to contact the head administrator, and start kind of talking to them, and just telling them about the person that we serve. And she was interested. All of this was over email. It was virtually -- we virtually delivered service to her. So we had an interview on Zoom. And Briggs & Associates supported her. She actually got the job. So that was really cool. And she went in and she started working. And Briggs & Associates was there to support her the whole way through and help navigate all of the issues, and unknowns, and you know, with COVID, it was really crazy. We didn't know if the school was going to open. We didn't know how many kids they would get. We didn't know how the closures would go with the schools, but we were right there for it all. So that's what this slide is about is long-term support. We supported her through hiring, and still continue to support her. So she actually had her VR case was closed.

She was able to maintain the job. And we continue to support her. A big part of this is maintaining relationships with managers and the people that she worked with just so we know like everything that's going on. And we're able to help her with every part of her job, everything that she needs. So that's a little bit about Briggs & Associates.

>> Thank you, Julia. We really appreciate it.

>> Thank you.

>> All right. Our next provider is Core Solutions. And the individual speaking will be Patricia Webb. And they have been in business since 2016. Core Solutio.

>> Hi, my name is Patricia Webb and I'm here to represent Core Solutio. We empower our client's lives through meaningful employment. The services that we provide are supported employment, job coaching, interviewing skills, community development, and accommodations support and security education. Core Solutio, as far as helping our clients to locate employment, we focus solely on assisting our individuals who have disabilities to locate.

>> Which means they sit alongside our coordinator and we explore the duties of the job and submit applications. We also coach our clients with key skills such as creating a resume and interview skills through role play. We do this at every meeting just to ensure they are comfortable with interviewing. Additionally, we get client's permission to attend the interviews with them. Sometimes the employers are okay with our staff attending and sometimes they're not. We usually respect their wishes. Just to ensure that relationship is maintained.

When it comes to securing employment, we train our clients to do things such as check their voice mail, emails, and text messages on a consistent basis and respond to all messages.

We also discuss the importance of follow-up as well. In case the employer does not reach out to our clients, we teach them to do things such as just making a follow-up call to check the status of their application. Once our employment, our client receive a job offer, we assist them with things such as the onboarding process just to ensure they have a smooth into their new role.

As far as maintaining employment, our client, once the client secures employment, and begins working, we assist them with actually maintaining their employment. Our employment coordinators consistent transportation, and if they don't have that support, we actually cover, we provide coverage in that area. We have job coaches who work alongside our clients within the first one to three weeks of employment just to reinforce the skills that they're learning.

We also find that employers, most of the time, they welcome job coaches. And in addition to providing job coaching, we follow-up with the client and the employer on a weekly basis just to problem solve any issues that may occur. If problems do arise, we are available for in person meetings with the employer to support our clients and also just to navigate issues in order to help the client to maintain long-term employment.

We want our clients and the employer to be happy with the placement. So we communicate with the employer just to let them know that we are available to answer any questions that they may have, and to support them as well as the client. Once our clients have proven that they are able to maintain employment, we will reduce our weekly visits and start seeing them once every other week.

Site visits are done in person as well as over the phone. Additional information about Core Solutio, we serve clients in the Metro area from Whitfield, Cherokee county, to Clayton and Gwinnett County. Our contractors are usually, they range from entry level, professionals, to seasoned professionals in the social services field.

Expansion force isn't hard, because we partner with colleges and universities throughout the State of Georgia with their handshake program, which is a job search program that connects students with employment. We were recently awarded a 3 year CARF accreditation and we solely focus on supported employment services. We also contract with DBHDD for individuals with disabilities, and we are affiliated with the Georgia collaborative with GVRA. Core Solutio is open to working with individuals of all ages, and with a range of disabilities. Our office is located in Atlanta near the battery home of the braves. You may visit our website at www.Core Solutio.com. Or you can reach our director Katrina Bailey at (770)405-9646. Thank you.

>> Thank you, Ms. Webb. We appreciate you taking time and presenting and telling about your services that you offer.

>> Thank you.

>> CHERYL: Okay. The next provider will be American Work. And Robert Howell, are you available?

>> Yes, I am.

>> CHERYL: Okay, Robert Howell will present today. And they have been doing supported employment services for the past 21 years and have worked in collaboration with GVRA for the past 15 plus years. You can go right ahead, sir.

>> Thank you. American work was find in 1999 with one golden rule we still follow today. We believe that anyone can work regardless of their disabilities when the right supports are in place. We follow the evidence-based Dartmouth model of individual placement and support as it relates to supported employment. American work provides IPS employment services and Albany, Thomasville, and Augustus and Savannah and statewide. Supported employment service is not only assist the client finding the job of their choice, it also helps them maintain their job once employment is obtained.

Our continued partnership with GVRA has been crucial over the years, because it adds an extra layer of support which increases the chance the client has of obtaining and maintaining employment, along with following the 7 principles of supported employment, which are rapid job placement, benefit planning, frequent treatment team meeting, client choice, zero exclusion, comparative employment, and continued supports.

I have been fortunate enough to be with American work since the start of the program since 21 years ago, and I want to share right quick one success story that proves the life-changing power employment can have on all of us, especially those with mental health issues. A client was referred to us several years back and we joined in him in the services as well as the local GVRA provider. The client had been in prison for 35 years and never worked.

Assistance of employment specialists in the GVRA counselor, employment was obtained at a local restaurant where the client strived. [Coughing] excuse me. He also became an advocate for others with disabilities and helped with fund raising for the Georgia mental health consumer network.

He was awarded the peer of the year award in 2019. He was also successfully close on GVRA services. Many of us during the COVID-19 pandemic, he faced challenging times. Due to his age and other health issues, he was not able to keep his job at the local restaurant and became unemployed. He also had a stroke that resulted in partial loss of his motion on his left side. But just like the saying goes, he believed if you're not knocked down 8 times, you get up 9. About 3 months ago, he was reenrolled with GVRA services and with the help of his employment specialist and GVRA counselors, he obtained a new job at the fountain of life rescue mission where he continues to use his powerful story to remind others to never give up because anything is possible.

Thank you.

>> CHERYL: Thank you, Mr. Howell. That was a very, very good story. And it just shows that our services are very much-needed for everyone. The next provider is Wiregrass Resource Group. Marc and Lauren, are you available?

>> Good morning.

>> CHERYL: Good morning. So Marc and Lauren will be presenting today. And they received the GVRA transaction in 2018. The services they provide are traditional supported employment, job coaching, workplace readiness and customized job employment. You can say next slide when we need to move on.

>> Mark, you're muted.

>> Okay. My computer is on, can you hear me now?

>> We got you, mark.

>> Thank you. My computer actually said I was unmuted. That's okay. Well, thank you for this opportunity, Ms. Roney. You'll have to excuse my temporary situation here with this. I'm using my iPad instead of my laptop. But a little bit about Wiregrass Resource Group. I want to say I love hearing the success stories. And every story, every client is a success story. At Wiregrass Resource Group, our motto is we're not in the disability business. We're in the "ability" business. It is our job to find each and every individual specific abilities, and match them with employment. That will enable these abilities. Enable the client. We love to hear the success stories. With Mr. Howell, that was awesome.

But once again, you know, we like to do everything. Our motto is partners in success. So we strive very hard to make sure that every client is successful. You can go and roll on to the next slide.

You know, everybody here is an employment specialist. I don't care what your title is. Lauren's executive title is Vice President of workforce development. But we are all employment specialists. That is the heart of this company. And the heart of this company is taking care of other people's basic needs to be successful. We [Audio fading in and out] they still work together with them. And so this is just a background of ourselves. We're a dual service provider with GVRA and DBHDD. So we have recently obtained that. We've already listed services that we provide with the state. So one of the things that I wanted to mention is, when we were reviewing our numbers, and going back to Ms. Berkoski, they had 80%, which is good. And out of 81 referrals, we placed 67% of our clients. So once again, you have 67 more success stories for this year in the State of Georgia with GVRA. Our retention rate is averaging at little above 90%. So it goes back to the client is successful. Which is what we want to ensure. You can roll on to the next slide.

This is just a little bit more about us. What we do, you know, absolutely we do things within, everybody knows a lot of times dealing with traditional and customized supported employment, you have to get out of the box. And we Roundtable out of the box ideas all the time. So we have weekly staff meetings. We have a client that is seemingly not progressing through the system, and not becoming employed, you know, we have out of the box idea sessions, think tanks to see what can we do to customize employment? Where can we go? What's going to work? So that's where Lauren comes in a lot. Her and our other employment specialist, always knowing what's going on in their individual markets. What employers are needing. Roll on to the next slide.

You can go into the next slide.

Once again, just showing you something about our team. And that is one of the basic things that we do at Wiregrass Resource Group. Everything is a team concept.

Not only do we support our clients, but we have the belief we need to support each other. It's been said at many staff meetings, if we can't support each other, how in the world do we expect to support a client? If we can't train each other and teach each other, how can we teach and train our clients? So once again, team concept is what makes us so successful. Keep going. You can proceed.

The different marketing techniques. You can't put them all on the slide. There's no telling what we might be doing. You know, we do go out into the market. We do what we call labor-market research. We're constantly in the market finding out who's hiring? What their needs are, do we have anyone who have strengths and abilities to meet the needs? Once we've done labor-market research and we define a client that would be a good fit for a certain employer, we then lead that client into workforce development. And that's actually going out and taking the client along with us on a job search, going out and representing for the client in several different ways.

I'm sure everybody else who presented and will be presenting, you know, they have practice these also.

Here is just a small list of our employees. And you know, the individuals that you would need to contact in case you want to further ask and inquire about our services. My wife and I, we are the founder and CEO and C.F.O. of the company. But we'll tell you in a heartbeat, what are we? We're employment specialist. Lauren is Vice President of workforce development employment specialist. Ms. Suzanne Prachal, employment specialist. Everything we do enriches somebody's life. It's about the client. Roll on.

You can roll on. And that should be it for our presentation. This has our address and just more contact information. At this point in time, we've got a special guest. I would like to introduce Mr. Dan Daily. Mr. Daily is the father of one of our clients we were actually going to invite for the client to come in, but he's at work. So Mr. Daily, if you can tell us little bit about your son. He may be having the same technical difficulties I was having.

>> Can you hear me now?

>> Yes, we got you.

>> Hold on. I think I just got it. Can you hear me now?

>> Yes.

>> Did I get it working? [Laughter]

>> Yes.

>> I'm sorry about that, everyone. I don't do this too often. But I had to -- my son and I had the pleasure of meeting Marc Reid two and a half years ago, I'm guessing, and it was a pleasure from the very start. He took my son who had suffered a brain injury and was never supposed to walk or talk or function. And worked with him after he had been through the rehab process and spent five years trying to get him a job. And we went through the process with Marc and he worked and built a great relationship with my son. And we were sitting in one of our last meeting before he was to start looking for a job, and Mark asked him where he wanted to work. And basically one of them was Kroger. So Marc called and said Kroger is having a job fair. And he took Chris and went in. And Chris came out with a job. And that was over two years ago. He's been working there successfully.

He's been able to keep his job with some help. He has a lot of issues that Mark helped him work with. And to this day, Mark still calls if something happens, because they built such a great relationship all the way down to how to properly handshake. And Mark will probably laugh, because he enjoyed that part of it. And so did my son.

And I'll tell you, as a participant in the GVRA program, we couldn't be more pleased as parents, because only thing you really want for your kids is to be successful. And we literally would have put in 200 job applications probably for Chris or, for my son, and we could not get anybody to hire him.

And Wiregrass Resource was able to do it out of the very first meeting. And everybody can say what they want, but that's a, you know, that's a commitment that it takes to help these kids out to have all these issues, and, you know, Chris just back from a 10 day vacation where we flew him up to Michigan and he spent 10 days traveling around, and basically bought different for every one of my brothers and sisters and I have 8 of them. So it made him very, very proud and very happy. And he had a really good time. And I think that's really about all I can say is that, I thank Mark every time I talk to him. And I will always have a lot of respect for him. And be able to help the program whenever I can and however I can. I can't think of anything else to add right now.

>> Thank you very much Mr. Daley.

>> Thank you, Marc.

>> I just wanted to say, that was a team effort not only between Wiregrass Resource but between you and your son. And with the GVRA. So this has been a great success story. Chris has been employed for over two and a half years now. In fact, the last report has been, he had been called in and asked him if he could come in and wound up working 8 hours. So he's become an intricate part of Kroger workforce there in his hometown. So this is just one success story. It's one of my favorites

because of the relationship with Chris. But we try to develop these relationships with all of our clients.

So thank you, Mr. Daley for coming in. And Ms. Roney, I'll turn it back to you guys.

>> Thank you very much. We just like to thank all the providers that took the time out to present today and bring your success stories, and share them with everyone on the call today. Thank you very much for your time. And thank you Mr. Daley, we appreciate it.

>> Thank you and keep up with the good work.

>> Thank you. At this point, we're going to move on to the provider guidelines manual updates. I just wanted to let you know that as you probably already know, the provider guidelines manual is on the website on the GVRA website. And if you click on the provider's tab, you can download the manual.

And it's like my Bible. I take it with me to when I come in the office or if I'm teleworking, I have it always available. Because I'm always going to it. And also if you have any questions, and if your provider relation specialist is not available, you can always email providermanagement@gvs.ga.gov. On the next few slides, I'll review updates and they have been made to the provider guidelines manual. And the manual was also going to be revised with the updates. And we should be uploading it sometime in November. So look for that in the near future.

So we're going to get started. On Page 3, the administrative section, we are including hyperlinks in the table of contents which that way you can just click on the hyperlink and then it will take you directly to that page, and you won't have to just flip through the manual. And you can go straight to wherever you need to go.

We're also adding who we are, mission, values, introduction, collaboration, and some definitions that we feel are being used and we want to make sure we get those defined in the manual.

We are moving all the Appendices to the back of the manual. So you can go straight to the manual when you need to pull a form or anything like that. And make that readily available.

And also, we are including appendix 0, which is the supported employment services identification plan. And appendix P which is supported employment services index plan. On Page 4 section 2 in the standard and provider guidelines, we are renumbering the section to add GROW. And growing is getting ready for opportunities and work which is a summer academy that took place this summer.

On page 6, we are deleting that page. This is a duplicate of another page with the table of contents that's on Page 3. And with the hyperlink that we're adding, that will take you to that page. There was just not a need to have additional page similar to that.

And on Page 7, under the purpose, we are adding the workforce innovate and opportunity act, which defines competitive integrated employment as work that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis. For which an individual is compensated at or below minimum wage and comparable to the customary rate paid by the employer or employees without disabilities performing similar duties and with similar training and experience. Receiving the same level of benefits provided to other employees without disabilities in similar positions, at a location where the employee interacts with other individuals without disabilities, and presented opportunities for advancement similar to other employees without disabilities in similar positions.

I also wanted to let you know throughout the manual, there are some grammar errors that have been corrected and so we have made those changes also.

So on Page 10, we added a sentence. New providers are required to attend onboarding new providers training, which will be taking place on the 20th of October. And following the orientation training for the onboarding new providers, package will include information handouts and materials which are prepared for the providers that can be downloaded from the GVRA website under the provider's tab.

So after we conduct the onboarding training, you can look for that information on the website. And we'll bring that to your attention at the training.

On Page 10, add after how to become a qualified GVRA/VR provider, note supported employment if DBHDD has not approved you as an IPS provider in Georgia, you will not be able to offer that service. And you can go to the page 158, 6005.08 provider qualifications.

On Page 11, the criminal background investigation requirements for provider staff which is appendix A, there has been a new process which has been implemented, which has been revised and will be implemented. And Sheila Pierce will discuss that after I complete going over what the updates are.

On page 59, section 2001 isn't 00 interpreters for the Deaf, section 2001.02, we revised the last sentence to read "contact the state coordinator-VR Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing services." On Page 75, section 3002.04, process for out sourcing. In paragraph A, we removed NAC standards. In section 2-9, Page 219, and we replaced that with association for the education of the blind and visually-impaired.

On Page 86, section 3005. Technology access training. Throughout the manual, we have spelled out AWT, assistive work technology. And in this section, we just wanted to let you know we want to do spell that out for clarity.

And we're going to make that also part of our definition at the beginning of the manual.

On Page 100, section 3009. Vehicle modification. In this section, we also spelled out AWT for clarity. And we made some corrections to some grammatical errors.

On Page 106, section 4000, pre-employment transition services, we added GROW to that section.

On Page 107, Section 000.02. We added 5 required Pre-ETS. And we added GROW academy in that. And page 114, Section 4006. We added GROW to the section and codes and added fees of $1,500 per participant.

On Page 132, section 6,000, employment skills development, on Page 133, section 6,000, workplace readiness, revisions were made individually or in small groups no more than 10 unless authorized.

On Page 132, section 6,000 employment skills development. Page 145, section 6003.03 provider qualifications. The second bullet was replaced NAC with association for the education of the blind and visually-impaired.

On Page 32, section 6,000, employment skills development, Page 155, section 6005.03, add the below two paragraphs as an exception to provider qualifications.

And F, GVRA may grant exceptions to the provider qualifications for individuals who do not meet the educational requirements if that individual's work experiences clearly demonstrates that he or she is experienced and capable of delivering the service.

G will be exception request must be documented and submitted to GVRA provider management for approval. GVRA provider management will consider approval of requests for exceptions on a case-by-case basis, and in its sole discretion. Documentation supporting exceptions to staff qualifications will be maintained in the provider's records. GVRA may ask for provider qualifications documentation prior to and during the provision of supported employment services.

We wanted to really mention that and bring that to your attention since that is the change that is going into the manual.

Page 156 and 157E report. In the bullet after disability, add as a bullet "job goal, must agree with VR work plan." In the bullet after location, and contact person and number, correct be job title. After wages, add provider must submit two pay stubs or wage documentation on employer letterhead.

Page 158, section 6,000, employment skills development. Section 6005.08, provider qualifications last sentence must read "for job-seekers to receive all the support available, IPS providers must be an approved qualified provider through DBHDD behavioral health and GVRA/VR.

And we're adding appendix 0, supported employment service identification and agreement form. And appendix P, supported employment extended service plan.

Just as a reminder, supported employment services forms are provided. Outdated forms are not accepted and only the forms in the manual are acceptable.

So, this is the conclusion of the provider guidelines manual update. And I just want to do find out if anyone has any questions. You can ask me or you can just go ahead and put it in the chat. And now I'm going to pass it to Sheila Pierce.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: Thank you, Cheryl, for going over that information. Most of you who have worked with the Agency for number of years recall that last year, we spent more than an hour going through all the many updates in the provider guidelines manual.

And we committed to updating it each year so that it never becomes obsolete again. So though the changes are for the upcoming year are minor, we just want to make sure that all of you, as providers, and the staff on the line today, are aware of what the updates are on an annual basis. We will continue to do this. And, hopefully, you found the information helpful or at least know what updates will be made to the document for the upcoming year.

I wanted to pause for a few minutes and talk just about the criminal background checks that your staff are required to go through.

I want to make sure you understand the focus for the slides that I prepared today. One, we often hear from providers, you know, why does it take so long to get the results of the background check for my employee?

Two, we hear from your employees how do I obtain a copy of my criminal background report?

And then, three, there's often the question internal of who does the individual register work for, because that information is not clear from the registration information submitted.

So keep in mind those three questions as I go through my slides, because they are designed basically to respond to them. Those other areas that we felt needed to be addressed to the whole group, and so I hope you find this information helpful. The slides will be available online after the presentation today for your reference if needed in the future.

To begin with, our role with the background check is that, basically, GVRA receives the registration. We review the registration. And then we approve them. The registration is the first step. Then next after the fingertips have been taken, and the criminal report run, we receive the report. We review the report. And we basically make a determination based on the information in the report.

You must know that 80% of the reports that come back have no hit meaning they have no background record at all. But there are times when a report that comes back that we review.

If the information is questionable, we will contact the information -- I'm sorry, contact the individual, inform them of the information that is in the report. And then allow them time to address any concerns that are in the report. And then the final thing that we do is we issue a determination letter.

As you look at your contract, next slide, please. When you look at your contract, you will note that the criminal background check is required for all of your employees who are working with VR clients.

If you refer to your contract, generally, on page 18 or section 11, it is titled criminal record investigation requirements for provider staff.

There, you will read that everyone, again, must undergo this criminal background check. And what I want to stress today is that it is needed before they begin delivering services to our clients. And again, when there is no concern and we receive the report review and there's no concern, then we issue a determination letter usually in about 3 days after we get the report. So it's a pretty automated process we have in place here. So it moves along quickly, unless there is an issue.

When there is information in the report, we're going to contact that individual directly, give them an opportunity to provide an explanation if we need one, and we want you to know that when this happens, we need to give them time and sometimes it can take up to 30 days. Not required, not always the case, but it can. I just want you to know basically if you don't get a determination letter within couple of days after the registration, generally, it's because the person has a report, and we're trying to get clarification on what it says. Next slide, please.

If a response is not received within a week, as I've stated, generally, it's because there's a problem. That problem is usually that we approved the registration, but your employee has not gone to take the actual fingertips.

Or we got the results, and there was a question about the information. Or the third one, and this happens often. There is no provider name in the registration that will help us identify who the individual works for, therefore, we do not know who to send the report to. So let's walk through for a quick moment how you obtain the ORI number, remember in the registration, there are two numbers critical for us. One is the requesting ORI, which is a number that represents your organization. And then, two, the reviewing ORI, that would be the GVRA. We're always the reviewing entity. And that is our ORI listed. But as you register the individual and check that GVRA, that number will come up on the registration.

GVRA is not the requesting and the reviewer. We are the reviewer. You are the requestor. So let's talk about how you obtain that requesting ORI number. Next slide, please.

When you go to the homepage of the website that you're required to register the individual to get the fingertip, note that there are three options at the bottom. For you registering to get a new ORI number, select the first box. Fingertip locations.

It has a locate, select that locate. And then the next screen will come up.

Next screen, please.

Thank you. Next slide. Thank you.

At the top, you see where it says GAPS Georgia application processing services. There's four options. Applicant. Agency. You're going to go to the second one that says "agency."

The second option there, there are two options when you hit the pull down box. Second option says requesting agency. That's the one you want to select. Click on that option. Next slide, please.

And you will see this page. Agency enrollment. Are you contracted or licensed through a government agency? You're going to select yes.

Next slide, please.

And when you hit yes, you will note up in the left-hand corner there is a number. That becomes your agency requesting ORI number. You're going to complete the balance of the information, and at the bottom of page hit continue. Don't use the number you see on the screen. I went through the process so that I could select the information and do a screen print so I can insert it into the presentation today your information. It has my name. But you want to go through the steps and get an ORI number for yourself. So that for future registration of staff, you're going to use that number, the requesting number, and then the GVRA number for reviewer. That way we know who the person you're registering works for. And after we get the report, we can review it and send a letter to you. Okay?

Next slide, please.

Now, second part of everything is when your staff says I didn't get a copy of the report or when we question information in the report, they say it is wrong. I didn't see it.

Here is how your staff can obtain a copy of the criminal background report for themselves. They're going to go back to the same site, that homepage and they're going to hit the same selection. Fingertip locations. They're going to select the locate button.

Next slide, please.

And after you hit it, again, you get the same screen. However, this time, they're going to go to the arrow where it points to "applicants" at the top. And they're going to hit the drop down box. Please go to the next slide.

And once you hit that box, you're going to get these options. To see their own personal report, they're going to select registration status and result. Once you select that option, they will see this slide which says view registration status and result.

They're going to enter where it says registration ID.

The number that is on the registration that they obtained when they paid the money to get the fingertip done, a number comes up. It's a registration ID number. And this is information that was entered for the registration at this point. They want to see the report, the criminal report, they came back when the information was submitted.

Once that information is completed, and they hit the find button, next slide, please.

They will get this screen. Request to review response.

Underneath it, it says if you request to view response, you will receive an email containing a temporary Passcode that expires in 10 minutes. Once the individual selects that option, request to view response, the next will be to receive an email with a number, and then they're going to come back to this site, enter that number, and then they will be able to see their personal report.

Two things to remember. One is the email address that was used for registration is where this request is going. And is designed to go to just to the person whose information is in the report.

If you are the employee, remember the email you used, because sometimes people use their work email. Other times they use a personal one. But remember the email used in the registration is the email that when you select this option, request to view response, a code is going to that email which you'll be able to use and then open up the report and see it for yourself.

Okay?

Next slide.

Just so that everyone is aware, our legal team is developing a policy for this provider staff background checks. We have a process, but there's a policy. And the policy, they will identify more specifically what kind of backgrounds are not suitable for working with VR clients so that all of us are on the same sheet of paper and clear about that. So that information is being prepared. Once it is prepared, the staff will develop a training presentation that we will use for all of our providers. So we will get your copy of the policy and then we will develop a training presentation to walk you through it so all of you are familiar with the information in it.

So that really is what I wanted to go through today. I know that in the past, different systems were used. In fact, when the manual was updated last year, at that moment, a different system was being implemented so we did not get an opportunity to incorporate that information in the last update. But this information, this GAPS information is going to be in the updated manual.

However, if you need to understand some of the steps you need to follow to obtained ORI and inform staff when they need to get a copy of their own report, these slides will be on the website that you can refer to going forward. Okay?

Are there any questions about the background check information? If there are no questions, at this time, we're going to continue with our agenda. I think Sharon Angel is next and she's going to spend a few minutes talking about the financial reports and the year-end information from our previous fiscal year. Sharon.

>> Good morning. Thank you so much. It is always exciting to be able to meet with you and welcome you and share information and updates regarding what's going

on within GVRA provider management. And so we're very excited about today. We hope this information will be very helpful for you. I want to first start out by saying thank you so very much to all of those providers who submitted their financial statements, and the year-end summary reports.

We know this was the first year that we actually made a concerted effort to collect those documents. And I would just like to say for the first year, it was very successful. We collected information from approximately 175 contractors, which included our profit and non-profit.

And so I know that in July, we rolled this out, and we gave you the information. And it was a bit abrupt and fast, but you complied. And so we are very excited about that, because this will be the process that we will keep in place moving forward, particularly, for FY22.

So with the year-end summary report as you see on the screen, that was the information that was required for you to report. This information is due within 30 days of the end of your contract fiscal year. So the contract fiscal year-end September 30th. So within 30 days, you are required to complete this information. The template is in the provider guidelines manual for you to use.

I would also like to say we got some very good reports from our providers. And so we will be highlighting those reports periodically in our communications that we will be sending out and sharing with everyone.

Unfortunately, there was some providers who did not receive any referrals and no funds were expended for the fiscal year. And that was due to COVID. So we are hoping that FY22 will be a much more favorable year. And that you will get referrals, and that you will be able to utilize the money that has been put aside in your contracts.

We have about 24 providers that we're still waiting on financial statements from. And that's only because of the fiscal close out year for the particular contract. Next slide, please.

And so for our financial information, as you see what is required is straight from the contract. And that information is due within 180 days. On based on the threshold of the money and principle and state funds that are expend, you are required to complete a financial report. This is required for every provider. Now, we're looking at adding some language in the contract which will speak directly to those providers. We have a few of those providers who are under the $25,000 threshold.

And so we are looking to add some language that will address those individuals. We're hoping that we can get everyone to the place where you're expending more than $25,000 per year within the contract year.

And as you know within your contract, you are required to maintain your books, records, and documents in accordance with GAP. Which is accepted accounting principles. And you are required to maintain that information for at least five years.

Now, when we talk about financial statements, what we're actually looking for is a balance sheet which gives a snapshot of your assets, your liabilities, and shareholders equity. We're looking for income statements that speak to your profits, or your losses. We're looking for cash flow statements, which shows your cash in and your cash out.

Again, this is an audited or unaudited report based on your threshold. We will use this information to make decisions for forecasting and for our budgeting purposes. Next slide, please.

And so when you send in your year-end report, your financial statement, of course if you're a profit business, you will send one copy to provider management. If you are a non-profit business, you will send one copy to provider management, and you will send one copy to the department of audits and accounts. Again, this information is due 180 days after the close of a contractor's fiscal year.

Now I do you want spend just a few moment talking about the auditor's role, which is a new role I have been assigned by the Agency.

And so, my role has been specifically designed to work with community partners and organizations to ensure quality services are beeping provided by qualified providers.

How are we going to achieve this goal? We are going to achieve this goal by conducting a systemic examination and fiscal review of your financial records and other supported documentation to ensure federal and state regulations as well as VR policy and procedures are being followed.

So we will do a deep dive to make sure that you have this information and that you are qualified and meeting the regulations that are specified, particularly in the provider guideline manual.

We want to ensure that there is financial accountability and integrity from the providers, which will be a little slightly different from the program reviews, which are conducted by the provider relations specialist.

We are going to look at your services as well, but we're also going to talk to counselors to ensure that they're happy with the services that are being received from you. We're going to be looking to see if the clients obtained employment, how long did it take the client to obtain employment? Did they receive the right services that were contracted for or authorized in the authorization? And, of course, we're looking at your financial information as well. We want to make sure that you have written policies and procedures in place. We want to make sure those procedures comply with our State and Federal guidelines. We want to look to make sure you're not charging compliance for services that are not authorized by the counselor. And we want to make sure you're maintaining the record in accordance to GAP. Sometimes our review is because we want to learn more about your organization. Sometimes our reviews will come because we're looking for information that is going to be very helpful for us.

Our auditors will focus more on compliance and the efficiency and effectiveness of the provider's operations delivering services to our VR clients.

We're currently building our team right now. Right now we have a team of one. But we're currently building that team. So soon as we get some people in place, we're going to start rolling out and conducting our audits. We will let you know in advance when those audits will be scheduled. The audits can be on-site or virtual.

Next slide, please.

Just to give you more information, we will do special investigation and following up on alleged allegation that have been reported from staff or based on review of documents that we're receiving through fiscal services. So sometimes we want to come out and do a deep dive to make sure there's no mismanagement or misconduct of VR funds being expended. You are strongly encouraged to participate on our onboarding of providers, which is going to be held next week October 20th. Because we'll go into little bit more detail about the auditor's role and what we will be expecting. Are there any questions for me at this time? If there are questions, please feel free to put those in the chat. And as always, feel free to contact me directly at Sharon.angel@gvs.ga.gov. Or you can contact me through provider management email listed on the screen or call me on my work cell phone. I thank you for your time and the information we shared with you, we hope it's been very helpful. Thank you.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: Good job, Sharon. Thank you so much. Our next presentation will be Eduardo Martinez. Some people have asked us about the amount of their contract this year in comparison to previous years. And big question is what happens if staff utilization of my organization is greater than the amount of the contract? So I want to talk about how we're going to be monitoring or how we are monitoring

agreements to, in essence, stay ahead of everything to make sure we don't run into any funding issues this year.

So, Ed, if you're ready.

>> Yes, thank you, Sheila. Good morning, everyone. Sheila mentioned, my name is Ed Martinez, I am VR standards and fiscal year manager and as all providers are aware, VR executed or are in the process of executing our contracts for the fiscal 2022 year. And doing so, many providers had questions regarding contract amounts, and what happens if they go over those amounts. So I just wanted to share the process that management uses for monitoring each provider contract spent.

So recently, we developed a provider contract dashboard. This allows us to drill down and analyze one provider contract at a time. Or we're able to pull reports and have information for all provider contracts. What makes this dashboard unique is that it is connected to our client management system Server, meaning it actually manually updates on its own. The slide I'm sharing is merely a demonstration of the information we'll be tracking throughout the year.

So, of course, we'll be tracking the payments you make for each provider. Authorization for each provider. And of course, outstanding balance remaining on the provider's contract.

Based on those amounts, we will create a projection. We will be monitoring that project throughout the year. That projection may indicate that particular provider's contract may be going over on its current pace or fall under its contract amount. So as we progress through the year, fiscal services and provider management may determine that it's appropriate to adjust the amounts on certain provider's contracts.

So I just want to make it clear that through the course of the year, we will be actively monitoring these contracts. And when necessary, we'll be proactive in making adjustments if necessary. So, basically, that's what I wanted to share, a quick synopsis and how we will be monitoring this throughout the year. If there's any questions, feel free to write it in the chat and if not, I'll just have Sheila to wrap-up with Q&A.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: I wanted you to know we have created this dashboard that it is real-time. I think the data is like within 24 hours of occurring to help us monitor the agreement. So if there is a need for adjustment, we will be in contact with you and happy to do so.

This last feature on the agenda today is really to cover a lot of information. And you likely are going to have your pen and pencil ready, your pen and paper ready. However, I do have it in a Q&A kind of format. And we kind of typed up the questions and the responses. After today, the document will be on the website. There are dates that are mentioned. Instead of doing a PowerPoint presentation or just reading it, we thought we use little bit of creativity. So we are going to have a Q&A.

I've asked each of the 3 managers and provider management to split up the questions and ask them to me. And then I'll provide the answers. And again, the document will be available for you after the session today. But the information is the result of questions asked by providers during this FY22 contract processing period that we've gone through so that you know we have approximately 180 providers. However, so far we've only fully executed about 82 agreements. Which means we're barely 50% of the way. We're getting a lot of questions, and I hope the neck document will respond to them. Do know that the document you receive this year for FY22 mirrors exactly the language that was in the FY21 agreement. There is no change in the terms and in the scope. So we were a little surprised when many of the agreements were delayed in the fact it has taken a while for them to sign and returned.

There were questions about the funding and other things. We read through all of your questions and attempted to respond to them in the next session so that everyone can hear the answers and everyone can hear the same responses, and as a team, we're operating in harmony here.

So to begin, I'm going to ask Cheryl Roney. What is the first question.

>> CHERYL: If I had a VR agreement in FY21 and have not signed the FY22 agreement, will I still be able to work with VR clients and receive authorization?

>> Cheryl, you can receive authorizations up to October 29, 2021. That's the last working day this month. The FY22 signed agreement with other requested documents must be received by GVRA no later than Friday, October 29.

The new fiscal year started October 1. We have extended date for using FY21 agreement through end of this month, because all agreements were sent to providers before October 21. After the deadline, after 29, and no further authorization will be issued to your organization for FY22.

Do you have another question?

>> I signed a signature page and returned it. Is that all I need to do?

>> No, you must sign the signature page and return the entire document. All pages of the agreement in addition to the certificate of insurance listing GVRA as a certificate holder.

>> I signed my agreement, does that mean my agreement has been fully executed?

>> No. The agreement is not fully executed until the Executive Director of the agency signs it. And you receive a copy that states this is your fully executed agreement.

>> Why is the amount of my agreement different from past years?

>> In the 2021 provider form, we explained to provider this year we're taking a different approach to determine in the contract amount. Basically, we took the following into consideration. The number providers that we have for each service, the utilization level of each provider by VR staff over the last 3 years, the number of clients receiving each service in each district historically, and we met with each district to give feedback from them on provider needs.

So all of those factors were given consideration and together they helped us determine what your FY22 contract amount would be.

>> I noticed this year only federal funds are listed and no state funds are allocated on the contract. Is there a reason for that?

>> For this year, I think Jonathan mentioned it earlier. The Agency shifted our funding sources to maximize our federal grant dollars. We shifted state funds to GVRA operations and are using the federal dollars to fund 100% for 12 months the provider agreements. Thank you, Cheryl. Sharon, did you have any questions?

>> Yes, ma'am, I do. Are you ready? Question number 6, did this change result in a reduction in my agreement amount for this year in comparison to previous years?

>> Great question. No, it did not. The analysis mentioned was conducted for each provider. And the amount recommended is the full amount in the agreement with no deduction resulting from the funding source. So that you only see federal and not state is not an indication that the total amount was reduced.

>> Thank you. Next question. What is the status of the recommendation to pay travel mileage to providers?

>> Sharon, that's an excellent question. We get that often from providers. As you know, we have a provider management task force that is made up of providers and staff. And that entire group has several subcommittees. And one of the subcommittees was to review travel to come up with the recommendation. That recommendation was explained to all of our providers in the GLI meeting. It is still under consideration. We

were not able to finalize it before we issue the FY22 agreement. But we are examining options, and when finalized, everyone impacted will be notified.

We do anticipate it being during the FY22 year. But today, I'm not able to give you a specific timeline. Thank you. That was an excellent question.

>> Thank you. And thank you so much for your response. I know that providers are sitting and just waiting on the edge of their seats to receive that information.

Next question.

If I receive authorization from staff that exceed the amount in my contract, can my contract amount be increased?

>> You know that information that Ed presented is so important. Answers is yes. We created the dashboard he explained. That is what we are going to be using, or I should say we are using to track the contract spend amounts. Information is based on actual data to include contract amounts, authorization amounts, and payments. That information is monitored to ensure if an adjustment is needed we'll coordinate it with you. The length of time remaining in the fiscal year and projected amount of time needed. So our hope is that to the level needed, to the utilization level needed by the VR staff for the entire fiscal year, that you will be funded and be able to respond to all requests or all authorizations issued by our staff. Thank you.

>> Thank you. Two more questions. Some of the services that I was approved for were not included in my agreement. We get this all the time. What should I do as a provider?

>> Good question. Send a note to Cheryl Roney. Cheryl.Ronnie@gvs.ga.gov. Or you can send it to provider management at GVRA.GA.gov. We'll follow-up or make updates and changes that are needed.

>> Thank you so much and my final question is how do I add additional services to my agreement?

>> Good question. As a provider, my recommendation is that you start by reviewing the provider qualifications for the service you want to deliver in the provider guideline manual. For each service there's a section titled provider qualification. Review that. If you meet the qualifications, submit that information to provider management at GVRA.gov. And we'll review it. Contact us if you have questions, and if acceptable, we'll amend your agreement to include the additional services requested.

>> Thank you so much. Ed.

>> Sheila, are you ready for my questions?

>> I'm ready.

>> Okay, question number 11. When I review the FY22 agreement, I notice that my business address was not correct. Or I noticed that the name of the principal signing the agreement is wrong or has recently changed. What should I do?

>> That's a very good one. We get that often. Any changes at all, soon as you can provide the correct information to us at provider management at are GVRA.GA.gov. Some notice needs documentation to validate. But if you need to notify us, we will help you to let you know what is needed to make the change on our end. So there isn't a one answer for all requests or all changes, but more importantly, as soon as it occurs, you have a change in leadership, organization has moved, you have a different person that needs to communicate with us, whatever that change is that relates to us, if you let us know, we will inform you of what is needed in order to implement that change. Thank you.

>> Next question. We provided Pre-ETS in fiscal year 2020 and would like to return to being a Pre-ETS provider. Can you add it back into our agreement?

>> We can. But there is a process. I do want to remind you in FY21, the whole program changed because of federal regulation changes. And to that end, providers were invited to a daylong meeting, and in FY21, in February of 21, we explained what the changes were and invited those interested in the delivering the service further. Many proposals were accepted and Pre-ETS was added. And they will remain in the agreement for FY22. On the other hand, some proposals were not accepted.

For providers who submitted proposals that were not accepted, we gave them an opportunity to talk to us further, to obtain additional information, and then to revise their submissions if they wanted to. Most of the ones submitted subsequently were accepted. And the service was added.

So if you were one of the ones that submitted a proposal that was not accepted, and you are interested in delivering Pre-ETS services, if you send us an email, we will be happy to arrange for you to meet with someone in transition to explain the current regulations. And then talk you through options based on your staff and skills to determine if that is a service that you will be able to deliver.

Now, I do want to add one additional comment here.

I know that during fiscal year 21, one of the comments we often made was that we really did not want providers going into schools, establishing programs that are GVRA was left or expected to fund. As we get into FY22, especially with COVID, what we're going to be doing this year is revisiting that to see how we can maximize on the relationship that our providers have in schools, matching that with our relationship to see how we can make and even better impact in delivering Pre-ETS during the school year. So those who are Pre-ETS providers, do know over the next couple of months, likely we'll pull you together to talk about better coordination in the school systems to deliver that service. Thank you, Ed. Good question.

>> My next question is what services do you need additional providers to deliver?

>> So you know, we have actually met, provider management has met with each individual district. The district manager, as well as representatives from the offices. We wanted to find out from them, we wanted to let them know what we have, what providers are available for each service in their district. And we want to do find out from them what do they need in order to deliver quality services to clients in their districts?

And I want all providers to know this. The most asked services by VR client services staff are customized and supported employment. Pre-ETS, and job placement. But the job placement specifically is without being coupled with other services as our current co-leads. So we've created a new code just for job placement services. For those clients who do not need any other employment training services, but only need help finding a job.

Providers are going to be notified after today of that new service. And it will include the qualifications so that if you're interested, you can request it be added to your agreement.

The rates are different from the current code. The services are different. And we will -- we've already processed it or have it approved, and so at this point, we'll send it out to all of the providers in those who are interested and those who are qualified can have it added to their agreement.

Additionally, there's a list of services and districts where the services are requested on our agency website with district map. Those top services are customized in supported employment, Pre-ETS, and job placements. By far, almost all districts requested our assistance in obtaining additional providers for this. Thank you.

>> Okay. For some of the Pre-ETS services, there is a minimum number of participants required during COVID it has been difficult to meet that minimum number. Will the Agency consider lowering the number or making an exception into referrals and COVID conditions returned to more normal contracting?

>> Again, good question. We do encourage providers to meet that minimum number. However, in FY22, we understand that COVID is still a factor in face-to-face participation activities.

So we will allow exceptions so the students can participate in Pre-ETS programs. Therefore, if fewer is the result of your best efforts, fewer than 6, then we will allow the program to be sponsored or to continue. But again, we want you to work hard to get that minimum number, but we recognize the circumstances that we're under today kind of drives or dictates the outcomes. So we respect that and we will go ahead and allow for fewer than 6 when that is the result of your best efforts. Okay?

>> All right. And my last question. What is the last day to return the signed FY22 agreement with the certificate of insurance if I want to be in FY22 GVRA providers?

>> That date is Friday, October 29. I do have, let's see. Cheryl, can you allow me to share, please? Can I screenshare?

>> How do I do that? Oh I stop screenshare. Okay, I stopped sharing.

>> Very good.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: Okay. So, can you see the map that is on the Board now?

>> Yes.

>> Okay, let me try to blow that up a little bit. So the stars that you see, let me say this. One, 28 providers have already signed their agreements so they are fully executed. They submitted the certificate of insurance and other information required.

The stars that you see reflect where those providers are located. We have them up in the north part of the state. I have a whole lot of providers with agreements here in the Metro area. A handful over in district 4. They're in Clarke County. As we scroll on down in district 2, you see couple there. District 6, there is a great need for providers. District 5, as you can see, the Metro area, the Bib, and Halston, and Troupe. And we have a handful in district 8. And just a few in district 7. The last day to sign your agreement to be executed for FY22 is October 29. If you're interested in continuing to work with us, and we hope you do, contact us with any questions, but please be sure to return your documents.

When we have all of our executed agreements, we will update this map. It will be color-coded to identify not only where providers are located, but we will have a key to identify the services all over the state.

For the providers who return their agreements, and are executed by the end of the month, we will also develop a directory that we will share with all of our staff and put on our website. And we're also working on a few other things. But we want to make sure that whatever directory we put together or whatever location, services and providers names included in the map that is put on the website, that it reflects the providers with current fiscal year agreements. So we'll take the next couple of weeks to work with those of you who have not returned your agreements to get them completed, get them executed. But we do need to have a cutoff so we're not continuing indefinitely processing contacts and get to other businesses throughout the year. If you want to sign your contract, follow-up with us if you have questions. We try to answer all the questions we receive up to this point. We'll continue to be responsive to you. But we are going to need to cut off on process for FY22. Since all agreements were mailed out, no later than the first of October, we felt that the entire month would be an adequate amount of time for you to review it, obtain your certificate of insurance, and then submit everything to us.

In addition to that, none of the basic contract language changed this year. So if you want to contract with us, we do ask that you follow-up with us. I want to thank my team for those excellent questions. We've gone through working with Eric heart map and GVRA admin to identify all the questions that have come in. And this does reflect easily 90% of them that can be considered generic or questions asked by more than a handful of providers. So we hope you found this helpful. Before I close out, there's just couple of announcements or things I want to mention to the entire group today. One is provider management made a commitment to our VR counselors who work with clients who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. We want to schedule a virtual round table with those counselors, and some of our providers who deliver services to that community of clients to talk about ways that we can improve service delivery.

We're going to schedule that some time over the next 30 to 60 days. So if you're a provider who delivered services to that community of clients, know that you'll be invited to a Roundtable so we can talk about some of the concerns the counselors have raised with you so we can work through some of those issues together as a team. The provider management task force, I just want to continue to thank everybody for the excellent work that you've done. Much of what you recommended has been implemented. Updating the manual, Cheryl gave you the outcome, but really she worked with the team of providers and staff to come up with those changes. So thank you to all of you who helped her.

The second is we have a provider onboarding training concession. First one is going to occur next week October 20th. We're asking providers, all of you, not just new ones, but all of you to attend this first one. Those of you who have worked with us for a while, your presence is needed because your feedback will help us to tweak the program as we roll it out for future years to be conducted primarily with new providers.

But things have changed. And there may be information shared that you can benefit from hearing as well. So we like for you to attend. We appreciate your feedback.

Back to the task force, I kind of jumped around a little bit. But the task force moving forward, there are about three committees who have recommendation that is we've not finished our final analysis. We're committed to doing that. We kind of got away from reviewing their recommendations while we process the FY22 agreements. But since they have been completed or will be by end of this month, we will be ready to go back to the recommendations. Good job. Over 90% of what has been recommended is being implemented. So I want to thank you. But I did want to throw out this for FY22.

We want that task force to work with us in FY22 in reviewing or recommending kind of a comprehensive analysis about our rates across-the-board. We're attempted to look at couple of rates right at the end of fiscal year 21 thinking we can implement some things in FY22. But we needed to do a more thorough job. So the task force is in place. We appreciate them. We're going to look and work through them to analyze where we are and to give us some recommendations. And so that will be the focus of the task force for FY22. And then there are many of you who responded to our request for information to develop a directory. Thank you, thank you, thank you. If you have not, we ask that you do complete the information and submit it to Sharon Hall. If your plans are to contract with us during FY22. Since the cutoff date is October 29 for finalizing the contracts, we will be ready around the November 1 to compile information, create that directory or listing of all the providers. And it is something that we will put on the website and share with clients and share with all of our counselors all over the state.

And, finally, I just want to say I want to make sure I stress the importance of the whole partnership arrangement with you as providers when you are meeting with and working with our clients. You know, just make sure that it's clear. That we're partners, we're working together. I think it says a lot to our clients. And it speaks to the integrity and the transparency of the relationship of our working together. So a lot of information. We tried to respond to everything in the chat as quickly as we can. Is there anything else that we need to cover? Our link goes to mid-day so it cuts off. Are there any other questions all of you in general or specifically need answered today? I see a hand up.

>> The map you provided, can you allow us to have a copy of that in the service areas we like to go into?

>> SHEILA PIERCE: I'll be happy to. If you let me get it to you after end of this month after I included the services and everyone with a contract, I'll be happy to do that. Yes.

>> My second question. There are some forms that we're being required to utilize. And if they're not in our service agreement and it has been executed, could that be added as an addendum?

>> A form that we require?

>> Yes.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: Yes.

>> Okay.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: If you don't mind sending me that information in the provider management at our website. That may be something I need to share with others. So let me know, we may need to send out a note to everybody. Thank you for bringing that up. If you send that and share it through the mailbox, we can respond to you. And in case we need to let others know, we'll be able to do so. Thank you.

Are there other hands? I do see someone has been going back and forth, been asked about the CRP portal. I'm going to need to follow-up with you. Currently, our CRP portal for submitting invoices, and client progress reports, it has only been made available for our CRPs. There is a cost to GVRA for providers who use the portal. And for many reasons, that group is the group that is using the portal. But I see someone going back and forth wondering if out of state organizations can use it. If you don't mind, send us a note at provider management email. And we can examine it further. But at this time, only our CRPs have access to the provider portal. Thank you.

Other questions? There were couple of questions about the background check information. And I did respond to it. Primarily that a person needs to get it only once at this time and that's prior to working with any VR client. It is required. If that changes, it will be in the Agency policy that our legal team develops. And if that is the case, if there is a change, when we roll it out, you will get a copy of the policy, and we will conduct a training session. But at this time, and in the past, it has been consistent. Only one time is needed and that is prior to beginning any work with our clients.

Is there a clearance letter? Or -- (reading chat) I'm not sure I understand the question from David Johnson. Are the checks done annually? No, it's only done once. And the clearance letter is referring to the determination letter. We send a determination letter after we have reviewed and made a decision. If there's any other than that you need clarification on, again, email us at provider management email. And we will be very happy to respond. Anything else today? Provider or teams, did I leave out anything?

>> Nothing that immediately comes to mind.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: Okay. Thank you so much for attending today. We hope you found the information beneficial. Again, providers, when you need topics covered, if you would send us a note in our mailbox at providermanagement@GVS.GA.gov. We will be happy to incorporate that in one of our upcoming meetings. If you want to be one of the three or four providers that present at the top part of the agenda when we have most of the VR staff present, we'll be happy to add you to that agenda going forward. I think most providers will find it beneficial, because we have representatives from our offices all over the state. And so many of them are not aware of all of the providers that we work with. And this is an excellent opportunity for you to let others know who you are, services you provide, et cetera.

Anyone else? Comments? We appreciate you. Questions? Thoughts? Thank you for the kind comments in the chat. We try to make these beneficial to you and timely. Okay.

>> Thank you.

>> SHEILA PIERCE: All right, guys. Thank you, thank you. Thank you for coming. Attendance was good as usual. And information will be on the website after. Usually a recorded version is there. Copy of all of the slides. And the Q&A that I went through with the managers and provider management, we're going to put that in a cleaned up document. It will be a Word document and we will put it looping side with the other information for the session today. Thank you.